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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 07/17/07-1

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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, July 16

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
July 17, 2007

07:56

Left Haneda Airport on JAL1841.

09:27

Arrived at Nagasaki Airport.

10:13

Met with Nagasaki Governor Kaneko at the Nagasaki Municipal Hall.

10:29

Gave a public speech in front of the Municipal Hall Park.

10:59

Arrived at Nagasaki Airport.

12:22

Left the airport on ANA3736.

13:53

Arrived at Haneda Airport.

14:24

Arrived at Kantei.

15:05

Left Kantei aboard an SDF helicopter, joined by METI Minister Amari.

16:33

Arrived at Satogaike Ground at Kashiwazaki City, Niigata Prefecture.

17:01

Arrived at TEPCO's facility adjacent to the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant and inspected the plant.

17:38

Met with Niigata Governor Izumida, Kashiwazaki Mayor Aida, and others at Kashiwazaki City Hall.

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18:05

Visited victims at Kashiwazaki Elementary School.

19:00

Met with New Komeito Representative Ota at Kashiwazaki City Hall.

19:22

Left Satogaike Ground aboard an SDP helicopter, joined by Amari and State Minister in Charge of Disaster Management Mizote.

21:03

Attended a meeting of relevant cabinet on Niigata Chuetsuoki Earthquake at Kantei.

21:24

Arrived at Kantei residence.

4) Water containing radiation flows out from Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant due to largest jolt

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)

July 17, 2007

Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) found from its survey yesterday that the spent fuel pool at No. 6 nuclear reactor of their Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant (in Niigata Prefecture) overflowed into the sea. With the overflow containing a small amount of radioactive materials, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) takes the situation seriously by noting, "It is unprecedented that radioactive materials flowed out from a nuclear power plant because of an earthquake."

According to NISA, water containing radioactive materials was found in the non-radiation controlled area at such places as the third floor of the Nuclear Reactor Building at around 12:50 a.m. after the occurrence of the earthquake.

The amount of radioactive materials contained in this water was found to be lower than that of the cooling water used to remove heat from the nuclear reactor. In addition, it was discovered that water from the spent fuel pool where spent nuclear fuel is stored in the Nuclear Reactor Building overflowed because of the shock of the earthquake. TEPCO inferred that this water overflowed from the outlet into the sea, noting that the amount would be at least 1.2 cubic meters.

As of late yesterday, this overflow has stopped, and there were no abnormal levels of radiation found in the sea water, TEPCO said. No impact on human bodies and the environment has been recognized.

5) Government sets up quake taskforce office in Kantei

In the wake of an earthquake occurred in the Chuetsu region in Niigata and northern Nagano prefectures, the government set up a taskforce office at 10:15 a.m. yesterday in the Crisis Management Center in the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei). Prime Minister Shinzo Abe ordered relevant ministries and agencies to work on confirming the state of damage and administering lifesaving

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measures. After returning to the Kantei from Nagasaki Prefecture, where he was campaigning for the July 29 House of Councillors election, Abe along with Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Akira Amari made an inspection tour of Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Station in Niigata and other places damaged by the quake.

The government yesterday afternoon dispatched an inspection team made up of 26 officials from concerned ministries and agencies. The team is led by Kensei Mizote, Minister of State for Disaster Management. Last night Abe and cabinet ministers concerned held a meeting at the Kantei. They compiled such measures as allowing free of charge use of the Hokuriku Motor Expressway since Route 8 cannot be used and the continuation of transportation of water and medical supplies by helicopters of the Self-Defense Forces and ships of the Japan Coast Guard.

In the meeting, Abe instructed to ministers concerned:

"In order to have disaster victims feel relief as early as possible, I want you to do your best to secure lifelines and repair the traffic network, as well as dispel anxiety of the sufferers."

6) Prime Minister Abe plays up speedy response to the quake, visiting disaster-stricken areas; Some think he has Upper House election in mind

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
July 17, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday quickly visited Kashiwazaki City in Niigata Prefecture, which was hit by a severe earthquake after returning to Tokyo from Nagasaki, where he had been on a campaign trail for the House of Councillors election. It was unusual for a prime minister to visit quake-hit areas the day the quake occurred. He apparently wanted to show the public how speedily his crisis management response was.

Abe just arrived at a venue for delivering a speech in Nagasaki City from Tokyo at 10:13 a.m. yesterday when the quake occurred in the Chuetsu area, Niigata Prefecture. Informed by his secretary of the earthquake measuring upper 6 on the Japanese scale, Abe instructed to the secretary two points: 1) relevant ministries and agencies and local governments would take all possible measures; and 2) top priority should be on saving lives. He said, "I will return to Tokyo immediately."

He started delivering a speech after 16 minutes after the occurrence of the quake, but he stopped his speech in one and a half minutes. Cancelling all his planned speeches in Saga and Kumamoto prefectures, Abe left Nagasaki Airport for Tokyo.

When a prime minister visits local areas, a small plane stands ready for emergencies in Air Self-Defense Force Iruma base in Saitama Prefecture. Abe and his aides considered using that plane, but they instead chose to use a commercial aircraft. As a result, he was able to arrive at Haneda Airport before 2:00 p.m. yesterday. Arriving at the Kantei, Abe told reporters, "I want to see with my own eyes the quake-hit areas. I also would like have the victims feel relieved." After about 40 minutes, he left for Niigata on a SDF helicopter from the Kantei's roof.

7) Earthquake off Chuetsu District: Party head-class officials of

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both ruling and opposition camps visiting disaster site in succession due in part to calculated motives with Upper House election just ahead

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Excerpts)  
July 17, 2007

Following widespread damage caused by an earthquake occurred off the Chuetsu district in Niigata Prefecture, both ruling and opposition parties have set up their countermeasures headquarters. Party heads have also visited the disaster site in succession. This is the second natural disaster that occurred during the Upper House election campaign period, following Typhoon No.4 (Man-Yi). Senior officials of all political parties had to extensively change their stumping tours. Aware of the eyes of voters, both the ruling and opposition parties stressed their stance of taking all possible measures to face the disaster.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited quake victims evacuated at Kashiwazaki Primary School in Kashiwazaki City, where he bumped into Yukio Hatoyama, secretary general of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto), who ended the inspection of the site. They crossed, simply exchanging bows in silence. It was a scene symbolizing officials of ruling and opposition parties racing to disaster sites.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has set up a countermeasures headquarters led by Secretary General Shoichi Nakagawa. Nakagawa was making a stumping tour in Akita City at the time of the quake. After making a street-corner speech, he flew into Niigata by helicopter. He joined Lower House member Tadayoshi Nagashima, mayor of Yamakoshi Village at the time when the Niigata Chuetsu Earthquake hit his village in October 2004, and received a briefing at the Niigata Prefectural Government Office.

New Komeito head Akihiro Ota left from Haneda Airport to Asahikawa Airport, Hokkaido just after 10:00 in the morning. He returned to Haneda Airport at 2:30 in the afternoon and visited an evacuation center in Kashiwazaki by land.

DPJ head Ozawa in the afternoon phoned Hatoyama from the party headquarters and ordered him to inspect the disaster site. Hatoyama was in a Shinkansen bullet train bound for Niigata City, when the quake happened. He was trapped in the train at one point. Ozawa told reporters, "I want the government to take sufficient measures. We will do our utmost wherever possible."

8) Japan, US delegates to the six-party talks meet, agree to cooperate in the first stage (of North Korea's denuclearization)

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
July 14, 2007

Prior to the meeting next week in Beijing of the chief delegates to the six-party talks on North Korea, Assistant Secretary of State Hill, the US envoy to the talks, met on July 13 with his counterpart, Kenichiro Sasae, director general of the Foreign Ministry's Asia and Oceanic Affairs Bureau. The two officials agreed to jointly keep in step for the time being. However, In contrast to the US side, which revealed a positive stance of starting talks on a peace arrangement on the Korean Peninsula by the end of the year, Japan continues to seek progress on the abduction issue, cautioning,

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"It is important to first complete the measures in the first stage." The difference in the stanced of the two governments could carry over into the main talks that start on July 18.

In the meeting, both officials agreed on the view that it was crucial the North Korea implement as quickly as possible the measures in the initial phase. On the measures in the next step as well, the two confirmed that at the meeting next week: "We will have in depth discussion on rendering inoperative all existing nuclear facilities listed in the nuclear program." On the abduction issue, too, Assistant Secretary Hill promised cooperation. He expressed his

hopes for a "implementing agreed matters in a balanced way," including at the Japan-DPRK and Japan-US-related working groups.

Earlier at Narita Airport, Hill stressed that above all, denuclearization was currently the crucial agenda item, saying, "No matter what instruments are used, without denuclearization, peace is impossible. We cannot sign a peace agreement unless denuclearization comes first." However, he announced that talks to move toward a peace agreement that would end the truce agreement for the Korea War would start in November in Washington. The talks would involve China and the Republic of Korea, and Hill hinted at the concept of further speeding up the US-North Korean dialogue.

Within the Japanese government, there is deep-seated alarm that the US might get even further out front, taking advantage of these talks. Prime Minister Abe, on July 13 in a campaign speech in Aomori, restated his thinking that the highest priority item, even in the Upper House election, was progress on the abduction issue, saying, "Until the day comes when all of the abductees set foot on Japanese soil and reunite with their blood relatives, I will continue to tackle this issue with an iron will."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki, as well, in a press conference on the same day, positioned the restarted talks as "an important opportunity to confirm that the measures in the first stage are being carried out quickly, as well as to start efforts heading into the second stage." In addition, he referred to the issue of providing North Korea with energy assistance, stating, "We must have confirmation that there is progress in Japan-North Korean relations, including the abduction issue." He stressed that there was no change in the government's policy course of giving priority to progress on the abduction front.

9) Hill concurs with North Korea's view that prior to rendering nuclear facilities inoperative, the North would submit a report on its nuclear programs

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)  
July 15, 2007

Assistant Secretary of State Hill, who is the chief US delegate to the six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear problem, met with the press corps on July 14 in Kanagawa Prefecture, where he was staying. On the question of the North's denuclearization, he stated, "Prior to the denuclearization of the nuclear facilities, there will be a report on the nuclear program." He then added: "The report will be given early in the next stage. It will either be in several weeks or in two or three months." The US government thus has gone along with the view of North Korea.

Obtaining a report from North Korea on its nuclear programs is

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expected to be difficult because of suspicion that it is enriching uranium (HEU). The US government at first assumed that denuclearization and the report would occur in tandem.

On North Korea's proposal, presented by the North Korean military delegate to Panmunjom, for US-DPRK military, Hill said: "Such would not be military but would be direct government-to-government talks." He indicated his thinking that the proposal would not be taken up.

He stressed: "The peace settlement talks will occur in parallel to the six-party talks, and they will not be substitute for them." There is a strong possibility that the peace talks will include the two Koreas, China and the United States. He gave consideration in his statement to remaining concerns in the Japanese government.

10) Japanese government concerned abduction issue may be left behind

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
July 16, 2007

The Japanese government welcomes North Korea's announcement that it has shut down its nuclear reactor in Yongbyon, but it intends to

watch carefully how disarmament would proceed from now. If a certain level of progress is made on the initial step of North Korea's denuclearization under the February six-party agreement, the weight of discussion in the six-party talks to resume on July 18 will be shifted to "the next step." Japan may find itself in a more difficult situation for its stance of offering no aid before progress is made on the abduction issue.

A senior Foreign Ministry official said in even tones yesterday about the North's statement: "It is no more than Pyongyang's implementation of what it pledged in (an international accord) February. I am neither surprised nor pleased at it." The United States had presented an optimistic outlook about whether the North would implement the first step. In the agreement, however, Pyongyang should have shut down its nuclear facility in mid-April, three months ago. Keeping this in mind, Japan will wait for the results of the monitoring and verification work by an inspection team of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Japan has decided to keep the policy of offering no aid unless progress is made on the abduction issue, even if discussion is shifted to 950,000 tons of heavy oil in aid to the North in return for its shutting down of the reactor, as the "next step" stipulated in the planned six-party talks. Based on the view that "other countries must be expecting Japan to join the aid," as noted by a Foreign Ministry source, Japan expects the US and other countries, in anticipation of Japan's aid, to urge North Korea to move the abduction issue forward.

A government source, though, commented: "North Korea might take no move before seeing what impact the outcome of the House of Councillors election will have on the Abe administration."

A North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman said yesterday: "(Further progress under the disarmament accord) depend on what measures the US and Japan in particular will take in order to drop their hostile policies toward our country."

A meeting of the Japan-North Korea working group on normalization of

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bilateral diplomatic ties is an opportunity for Japan to press North Korea to resolve the abduction issue. But the possibility is also slim that a working group meeting will be held on the sidelines of the upcoming six-party talks. The focus of discussion might be on energy aid, with Japan being unable to see progress on the abduction issue.

11) North Korea, with eye on Upper House election, intensifying criticism of Japan

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Full)  
July 15, 2007

North Korea is carefully watching the impact that the upcoming House of Councillors election will have on the government led by Prime Minister Abe, who is waging an uphill campaign. Pyongyang has severely criticized Japan almost every day since early July. On July 18, the six-party talks will resume in Beijing, but the DPRK seems determined not to take any action before the Upper House election, leaving no hope for a thaw in relations.

The Rodong Daily News, the organ of the North Korean Communist Party, carried a comment on Japan's Upper House election on July 11 in which it referred to the possibility that the prime minister would step down. The daily wrote: "In the event that the Liberal Democratic Party loses the election, the Abe administration might be unable to survive."

According to sources related to the six-party talks, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan, North Korea's chief negotiator, told United States Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, the US top negotiator, when he visited Pyongyang: "The North will wait and see how things go until the Upper House election ends." As shown from this remark, North Korea apparently is highly interested in how the election ends up.

Since then, the North has lashed out at Japan more harshly and frequently than before.

In a statement and on other occasions, the North Korean government has begun to bitterly attack Japan not only for its stance of prioritizing a settlement of the abduction issue but also for its move to auction off the land and building of the headquarters of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon). A statement issued by the North Korean Foreign Ministry on July 1 expressed hostility toward the Abe administration, saying: "The Abe administration is behaving irrationally in an attempt to drive the relationship between North Korea and Japan into the worst possible situation and to prevent progress in the six-party talks."

In response to the North's criticism of Japan, a senior Foreign Ministry official commented: "This proves that Pyongyang has begun to have an interest in Japan." It is unlikely, though, that North Korea will present any material that will work favorably for Prime Minister Abe in the six-party talks starting on July 18.

From the beginning, North Korea has been moving to drive Japan into isolation in the framework of the six-party talks. In addition, the Upper House election is unlikely to be a positive element to improve relations between Japan and North Korea in the six-party talks.

12) Letter of protest against "comfort women" resolution lodged with

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US Embassy in Tokyo

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)  
July 14, 2007

In reaction to the adoption of the so-called wartime comfort-women resolution by the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs, a group consisting of 223 lawmakers, local assembly members, intellectuals, and others, "Ianfu Mondai no Rekishiteki Shinjitsu o Motomeru Kai" (council to seek the truth of the comfort women issue; represented by Satoru Mizushima, president of Nihon Bunka Channel Sakura) lodged a letter of protest calling for the withdrawal of the resolution with the US Embassy in Tokyo on July 13. The protest said; "The resolution was based on incorrect information that is not in line with the truth. We hope you will verify it once again." The group plans to send the same letter of protest shortly to all House representatives.

SCHIEFFER